



System Oversight Committee

2023
Annual Report

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Governor

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Director



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STATE OF MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Members of the Missouri General Assembly:

On behalf of the AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee, I present the committee's 2023 annual report.

From December 1, 2022, through November 30, 2023, Missouri issued a total of 11 AMBER Alerts for 13 children (two alerts were for more than one child. Twelve children were located safe in Missouri and one located safe in Illinois).

Within this summary you will find the following:

- An updated list of AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee members;
- Technical update information regarding advancements in the Missouri AMBER Alert System; and information about training conducted statewide related to the AMBER Alert System;
- Relevant statistics for the period of December 1, 2022 through November 30, 2023;
- July 19, 2023, State Emergency Communications Committee meeting minutes; and
- December 4, 2023 AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee meeting minutes.

In 2023, recent enhancements to Missouri's AMBER Alert System were challenged by unannounced changes at the platform formerly known as Twitter (now known as X) that restricted access to the platform. Missouri and other states had been using links to Twitter in AMBER Alerts in order to share photographs and far more detailed data than can be delivered in a short AMBER alert text message alone. Twitter/X had been an ideal platform because of its capacity to handle the immense traffic volume that AMBER Alerts generate within minutes. The Missouri State Highway Patrol continues to explore a long-term solution. Despite this setback, during the reporting period, all AMBER Alerts ended with the safe recovery of the endangered children, three of those recoveries as a direct result of members of the public receiving and responding to the AMBER Alert.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra K. Karsten".

Sandra K. Karsten
Director, Department of Public Safety
Chair, AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee

Missouri AMBER Alert Mission Statement

The mission of the AMBER Alert Program is to develop and coordinate the efforts of law enforcement, the media, and transportation in order to increase public participation in safely recovering abducted children through targeted education, increased communication, and effective sharing of resources.

AMBER Alert History

The national AMBER Alert Plan was created in 1996 after nine-year-old Amber Hagerman was kidnapped and murdered while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas. Missouri's AMBER Alert plan was formed in 2003, following the Missouri General Assembly's passage of Senate Bill 30.

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Title 11—DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
Division 30—Office of the Director
Chapter 10—Amber Alert
11 CSR 30-10.010 & 11 CSR 30-10.020

Amendment filed Aug. 20, 2020, effective March 30, 2021.

PURPOSE: This rule establishes guidelines for determining when an AMBER Alert should be activated and the procedure for activating the alert.

(1) In the event of a missing child, the reporting agency shall first determine the following criteria are met:

(A) The missing child qualifies as an “abducted child,” defined as a child age seventeen (17) or under whose whereabouts is unknown and who has been determined by local law enforcement to be—

1. The victim of kidnapping as defined by section 565.110, RSMo; or
2. The victim of a crime of child kidnapping as defined by section 565.115, RSMo, the statutory age limit notwithstanding;

(B) The child is in the custody of someone other than a parent, guardian, or other official custodial entity, or sufficient evidence exists to indicate harm may come to a child from a parent, guardian, or other official custodial entity; and

(C) Sufficient descriptive information exists to enhance the possibility of recovery, such as—

1. The time and location of the incident;
2. A physical description of the abducted child or his or her clothing, if known;
3. A physical description and identity, if known, of the abductor and whether or not the abductor is armed; and
4. A vehicle description and direction of travel.

(2) The reporting agency shall take a complete report and validate the information.

(3) The reporting agency shall—

(A) Complete and submit a Missouri AMBER Alert Abduction Form through the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System (MULES). A request can also be made by completing a Missouri AMBER Alert Abduction Form on the Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) website. The form should then be emailed or faxed to the MSHP communications division; and

(B) Enter the incident into MULES and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database.

(4) Upon receipt of the AMBER Alert Abduction Form, MSHP Communications Division personnel shall contact the reporting agency to confirm the validity of the alert.

(5) After receiving confirmation, MSHP Communications Division shall then disseminate the alert.

AUTHORITY: Section 210.1014, RSMo Supp. 2020.

Section 210.1014 RSMo states, "There is hereby created the 'AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee' whose primary duty shall be to develop criteria and procedures for the AMBER Alert system and shall be housed within the Department of Public Safety." In 2019, HB 397, known as "Hailey's Law," was signed into law. Hailey's Law requires the AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee to meet at least annually and provide an annual report.

AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee

Members:

Chair, Director Sandra K. Karsten, Missouri Department of Public Safety

Captain John J. Hotz, Missouri State Highway Patrol

Deputy Communications Director Sami Jo Freeman, Missouri
Department of Health & Senior Services

Pike County Sheriff Stephen Korte, Missouri Sheriffs' Association

Chief Robert N. Connell, Missouri Police Chiefs Association

News Director Bridget Lovelle, KY3 and KSPR, Television Broadcasters'
Representative

Program Director Todd Nixon, KBEQ-FM, Large Market Radio
Broadcasters

Owner/Managing Partner Chelley Odle, B104.3, Small Market Radio
Broadcasters

AMBER Alert Criteria

The AMBER Alert activation criteria are as follows:

- Law enforcement officials have reasonable belief that an abduction has occurred, which meets the definition in Section 565.110 or 565.115 RSMo.
- Law enforcement officials believe there is a credible threat of serious bodily injury or death to the victim.
- Enough descriptive information exists about the victim and the abductor for law enforcement to issue an AMBER Alert.
- The victim of the abduction is a child 17 years of age or younger.
- The child's name and other critical data elements — including the child abduction (CA) flag — have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system.

Note: Parental disputes do not apply unless a possibility of harm to the child has been determined.

Technical Update

In 2023, the Missouri State Highway Patrol implemented the following enhancements to the Missouri AMBER Alert System:

- The continued roll out of the MoAlerts interface with law enforcement License Plate Recognition (LPR) systems. This interface allows LPR systems to receive AMBER Alert information, including license plate and vehicle description, the moment a full alert is issued.
- Enhancements to streamline the way information for an existing alert is updated, including ensuring the updated information can also be submitted to the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) through an EAS alert.
- The addition of the wireless notification region to the alert poster, so the public can easily see where in the state the wireless alert was issued. This, in turn, helps those who reside outside the notification region to better understand why they did not receive the wireless alert.

- Miscellaneous enhancements requested by Troop F to enhance the usability of the application and streamline the ability to activate an alert.

The Missouri State Highway Patrol continues working to:

- Implement an alternative to using the X platform (formerly known as Twitter). In July 2023, X, without prior notice, restricted the ability for those without an existing account to view social media posts. Previously, X allowed anyone to view social media posts whether they had an X account or not, thereby making it the ideal platform for MoAlerts to share AMBER Alert information. Initially, the use of Microsoft Frontdoor was viewed as a solution; however, testing revealed that the cache used by this platform did not update across all regions simultaneously, which could cause confusion for those viewing the alert using different internet service providers. Currently, testing is underway with a separate solution that leverages Microsoft Azure, a public cloud platform.

Key messages for those seeking full AMBER Alert information.

There are several other locations for individuals to get additional information if they are not logged in to X:

1. Traditional broadcast media (as well as their websites and print media websites);
2. Missouri State Highway Patrol Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/motrooper>; and
3. Missouri State Highway Patrol Alerts Page: <https://www.moalerts.mo.gov/>. (This page allows anyone to subscribe to receive AMBER Alerts through email.)

Training

The Patrol's Criminal Justice Information Services Division trainers include training on the processes and functions of AMBER and BLUE alerts as well as Endangered Silver and Endangered Person Advisories within the certification and recertification classes for users of the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System (MULES). MULES classes for the period of December 1, 2022 through November 30, 2023, provided this training for 3,963 attendees.

MULES Full Certification Classes

One block of training provides an explanation of the issuance criteria for Missouri alerts and advisories and the process for their issuance, as well as the importance of entering missing person and other potential related information into MULES and NCIC.

Recertification Classes & Terminal Agency Coordinators' Meetings

This training reviews the issuance criteria and process for all alerts and advisories, technological advances, and covers any information related to new laws that pertain to the Missouri alert system.

During the period of December 1, 2022 through November 30, 2023 this training was provided to:

- A) Statewide MULES users — 868 attendees
- B) Terminal Agency Coordinators' Meeting — 405 attendees

Missouri AMBER Alert Training Plan

Training will help ensure the preparedness of all personnel who potentially have a role in AMBER Alert activations. The developed courses, training, networking, and educational opportunities are intended to:

- Help officers understand their roles and responsibilities as it pertains to endangered missing and abducted child incidents;
- Ensure law enforcement, broadcasters, and media are familiar with all aspects of the Missouri AMBER Alert plan, including activation criteria and procedures;
- Provide communication personnel with information and technical knowledge about NCIC entries and specific plan notification procedures and criteria;
- Increase public awareness and understanding of the AMBER Alert Program;

Training

- Ensure public information officers are aware of the process involved in the AMBER Alert Plan;
- Keep the AMBER Alert coordinator and designated administrators current on training and prepared to issue all alerts;
- Ensure law enforcement officers and support personnel are aware of the alerting systems available and how to request them;
- Achieve the greatest reach, relevance, and impact for those who need AMBER Alert information.

Two Missouri Alerts Training events were held in 2023. The training locations were Poplar Bluff (Troop E and Troop G areas) on September 18, and St. Joseph (Troop H area) on September 20. The total attendance for these events combined was approximately 40 attendees. The classes in Macon (Troop B) and Rolla (Troop I) were canceled due to a low number of people signed up for the classes.

Captain Jason Crites attended the following AMBER Alert training sessions and meetings in 2023:

- AMBER Alert Symposium and an I-SEARCH Meeting in Tucson, Arizona, April 18 through April 20;
- NCMEC Protect. Reduce. Prevent: Leadership Seminar on Missing and Exploited Children in Alexandria, Virginia, June 6 through June 8;
- AMBER Alert Region 4 meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas, on July 17;
- I-SEARCH Meeting in East Lansing, Michigan, October 4 and 5.

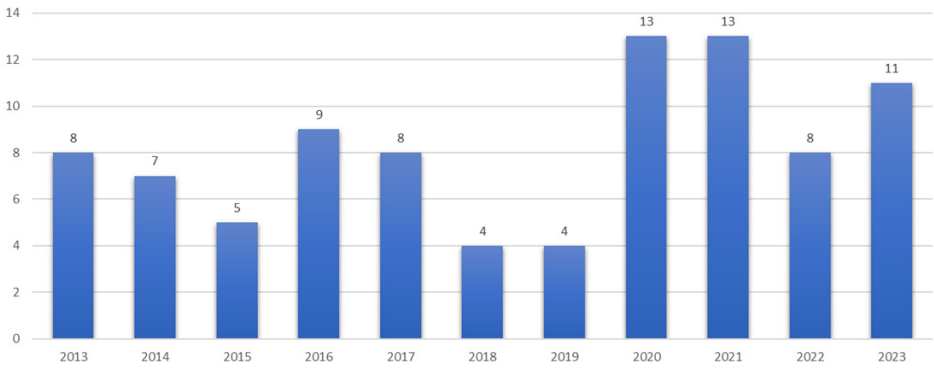
AMBER Alert Statistics

December 1, 2022 - November 30, 2023

30 AMBER Alerts were requested (several included more than 1 child reported missing — a total of 38 children were reported missing)

- 11 AMBER Alerts were approved/met AMBER Alert criteria
 - 11 were broadcast:
 - 13 children total (2 alerts involved 2 missing children)
 - All 13 children were located safe (12 were located in Missouri, 1 in Illinois)
- 2 concluded when the child involved was found safe prior to verification that AMBER criteria were met:
 - 2 children total (1 child was located safe in Missouri, 1 child was located safe in Arkansas)
- 17 were denied/did not meet AMBER Alert criteria
 - 13 did not meet AMBER Alert criteria and were approved for issuance as an Endangered Person Advisory (EPA):
 - 2 EPAs were not broadcast as the children reported missing were located safe prior to broadcast:
 - 4 children total – all 4 children were located safe in Missouri
 - 11 EPAs were broadcast:
 - 11 children total – all 11 children were located safe in Missouri
 - 4 AMBER Alert requests did not meet Missouri AMBER Alert criteria and no other alert was issued:
 - 8 total children (1 request involved 4 children missing and 1 request involved 2 children missing)

Approved Missouri AMBER Alerts 2012 - Present*



July 2023 SECC Meeting

Attendees:

Director Sandy Karsten, Missouri DPS
Homeland Security Director Kylie Dickneite, Missouri DPS
President Chad Mahoney, Missouri Broadcasters Association
Contract Engineer Bob Moore, Missouri Broadcasters Association
Captain John J. Hotz, MSHP PIED
Captain Jason Crites, MSHP Troop F
Director of Radio Corey Chaney, MSHP
Operations and Training Section Chief James Parks, MSHP
Asst. Director of Criminal Justice Information Services J.D. Reece, MSHP
Lieutenant Eric Brown, MSHP PIED
Communications Director Mike O'Connell, Missouri DPS

The State Emergency Communications Committee met July 19, 2023. Missouri Broadcasters Association Contract Engineer Bob Moore serves as chair of the SECC, per Federal Communications Commission requirements. Missouri State Highway Patrol Director of Radio Corey Chaney serves as vice chair of the SECC, per FCC requirements.

Chairman Moore began the discussion by expressing his continuing interest in broadening participation in the SECC to include cable television operators and cellular telephone providers. Vice Chairman Chaney reported that outreach efforts would continue, but in the past, cellular providers had conveyed that they do not see participation in the committee as central to their role. They have expressed the view that it was up to cellular customers to decide whether they wished to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts. While cable operators are required to participate in EAS alerts on each channel they carry, they have declined to attend Missouri SECC meetings, as no one group (Comcast, Fidelity, Mediacom, etc.) wishes to speak for all other cable systems. Mr. Chaney said he would continue outreach efforts.

It was pointed out that while the Highway Patrol has been targeting AMBER Alerts shared via WEA to the specific areas where the abductions take place (in order to discourage cellphone users from disabling the alerts) AMBER Alerts delivered through EAS continue to be broadcast statewide in Missouri.

Mr. Moore provided an update on the Federal Communications Commission's recent actions, including on the state of Missouri's Emergency Alert System Plan. The FCC has not accepted Missouri's Emergency Alert System Plan because it utilized what is referred to as a "legacy" EAS format that relies on audio to pass messages over a network of over-the-air radio stations. (The plans of fewer than five U.S. states

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received FCC approval, according to Mr. Moore.) Legacy systems use radio stations with strong signals (Local Primary radio stations or LP1s) to transmit messages to smaller radio and television stations across the state. The FCC now views this system as less reliable than IP-based formats that utilize the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System operated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Missouri has 29 LP1 radio stations. Mr. Moore indicated the FCC would also prefer that Missouri's plan include a backup system to get messages to the 29 LP1 stations if their IPAWS connections fail. Mr. Moore said that Sirius XM receivers could serve as backup receivers by monitoring the Sirius Preview channel, which currently transmits alert messages. Mr. Moore estimated that these receivers could be acquired for about \$80 each. Sirius does not charge a subscription fee for its preview channel.

There are approximately 400 radio and television stations in Missouri. The committee discussed the possibility of backing up all 400 stations through Sirius receivers, thereby providing every station with a direct backup to IPAWS alerts. Homeland Security Director Dickneite said that DPS expects to be able to fund this emergency communications expenditure utilizing Office of Homeland Security funds.

Missouri State Highway Patrol has positioned a backup ENDEC system at Troop B and Troop F to be utilized if there is a need for an EAS alerting message to broadcasters and IPAWS is not operational. The ENDECs are used as both a receiver and transmitter of EAS alerts using a cellular modem to distribute the message through the internet. Testing shows that this new backup system works very well and is nearing rollout to all LP1 stations. The new system provides options for future expansion of capabilities. This system fills the gap created when the old low-band system no longer functioned as intended. While satellite would likely be a more reliable option, it would be cost prohibitive.

According to the Federal Register, as of Dec. 12, 2023, all EAS participants must begin transmitting EAS messages in the IP-based format when available.

Missouri Broadcasters Association President Chad Mahoney provided an update on some U.S. automakers discontinuing the installation of AM radios as standard equipment in new vehicles. MBA opposes this. Mr. Mahoney said that Ford has said that AM radios can interfere with the electronics in today's vehicles. Originally, the discussions related to electric vehicles; then it applied to all Ford vehicles. Mr. Mahoney said AM radio is a key source of public warning information and that there is strong opposition in Congress, including from the Missouri delegation.

The committee agreed to meet on July 17, 2024, at 1 p.m.

Meeting adjourned.

December 2023 Agenda

Missouri AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee Meeting

Monday, December 4, 2023, 1100 hours

Attendees:

Director Sandra K. Karsten, DPS
Captain John J. Hotz, MSHP PIED
Deputy Communications Director Sami Jo Freeman, DHSS
Sheriff Stephen Korte, Pike County Sheriff's Office
Chief Robert N. Connell, St. John Police Department
News Director Bridget Lovelle, KY3 and KSPR, Television Broadcasters
Program Director Todd Nixon, KBEQ-FM, Large Market Radio Broadcasters
Owner/Managing Partner Chelley Odle B104.3, Small Market Radio Broadcasters
Captain Jason Crites, MSHP Troop F
Captain Gara Howard, MSHP CJIS
Division Director Corey Chaney, MSHP CommD
Assistant Director Jeffrey D. Reece, MSHP CJIS

Guests:

Communications Director Mike O'Connell, DPS
Lieutenant Eric F. Brown, MSHP PIED
Public Information Specialist III Meghan Basinger, MSHP PIED

Welcome and Introductions — Director Karsten

Discussion/Approval of Draft AMBER Alert Annual Report — Captain Hotz

AMBER Alert statistics for 2023 — Captain Crites

Communications Update — Mr. Chaney

Technical Update — Mr. Reece

Training Update — Captain Crites

Closing and Adjournment — Director Karsten

December 2023 Minutes

Missouri AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee Meeting

Monday, December 4, 2023, 1100 hours

Members:

Director Sandra K. Karsten, DPS
Captain John J. Hotz, MSHP PIED
Sheriff Stephen Korte, Pike County Sheriff's Office

Members via WebEx:

Chief Robert N. Connell, St. John Police Department, Missouri Police Chiefs Association
Deputy Communications Director Sami Jo Freeman, DHSS
News Director Bridget Lovelle, KY3 and KSPR, Television Broadcasters
Program Director Todd Nixon, KBEQ-FM, Large Market Radio Broadcasters
Owner/Managing Partner Chelley Odle, B104.3, Small Market Radio Broadcasters

Guests:

Captain Jason Crites, MSHP Troop F
Captain Gara Howard, MSHP CJIS
Division Director Corey Chaney, MSHP CommD
Assistant Director Jeffrey D. Reece, MSHP CJIS
Communications Director Mike O'Connell, DPS
Lieutenant Eric F. Brown, MSHP PIED
Public Information Specialist III Meghan Basinger, MSHP PIED

Director Karsten welcomed meeting attendees and took roll.

A quorum was declared.

The committee discussed the previously emailed draft of the AMBER Alert System Oversight Committee's 2023 Annual Report. Captain Hotz noted the added Key Messages, which lists other ways people can receive AMBER Alert information. Even with all the challenges with the social media platform X, formerly Twitter, alerts are still getting out – children are being located safe.

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Director Karsten proposed the draft of the 2023 report, without the December meeting minutes, be approved. Sheriff Korte motioned to approve this idea. Chief Connell seconded the motion. The 2023 draft report was unanimously approved, subject to the addition of December 4, 2023, meeting minutes. The committee-approved December meeting minutes will be added to the approved report. The updated report will be sent to the committee for final approval. An electronic meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2023.

AMBER Alert Statistics

Captain Crites reviewed the AMBER Alert statistics for 2023. Director Karsten asked what he would attribute to the success of locating these children. Captain Crites stated the process Missouri uses, with everyone working together from CJIS to the requesting agency and radio operators, helps get the information out quickly and efficiently. Also, sending Wireless Emergency Alerts out regionally has helped. By sending WEAs only to selected regions, the number of people turning off alerts on their phones has significantly decreased.

Communications Update

Director Chaney informed the committee that the backup Missouri warning system is in its final stages. Section Chief Brad Coffey has been working with Bob Moore, of the Missouri Broadcasters Association, to finalize configuring the last half of the units. It was stated that the goal is to start distributing the units around the first part of next year. Sheriff Korte asked if we needed to start financial planning for future equipment upgrades. Director Chaney answered the cost of the backup is not significant and funding should be available.

Assistant Director Reece mentioned the Patrol's Criminal Justice Information Division has added the region(s) the notification was sent to onto the PDF version of the alerts. This ensures that if someone did not receive the message and only has seen the AMBER Alert poster, that they have the regional information as well.

Technical Update

Assistant Director Reece stated that CJIS is constantly working to streamline the alerting process. After an AMBER Alert, there is an after-action meeting to discuss the alert, identify any issues, and if there is any action that needs to be taken to improve the process.

Regarding the changes to X and the distribution of AMBER Alert information: CJIS started working with Microsoft and they built a cloud-like system for the Patrol. After testing, CJIS realized this would not work due to the information being "cached," or saved, to multiple servers. The servers do not update simultaneously resulting in the alerts not updating appropriately. CJIS is still working with Microsoft and is in the testing phase of a different potential solution. If this solution proves to be effective, CJIS plans to go live with the new system in the first quarter of next year. This is cloud based with no login required, CJIS has more control and believes it will be a reliable, permanent solution. This will replace the link in the wireless message that directs people to X. Alert information will still be sent to X as an additional way to get information disseminated. Mr. O'Connell asked if there would be a charge. Mr. Reece said that it will be covered under the current contract the Patrol has with Microsoft.

Ms. Lovelle asked if any AMBER Alerts were located by License Plate Readers? Captain Crites stated he was not aware of any but as the use of LPRs expands and grows, he expects they will help in the future.

Training Update

Captain Crites gave an overview of the training sessions the Patrol held and the training he attended.

Ms. Lovelle inquired about providing more training with the media. Captain Hotz replied that the Patrol is working on a shortened version of the training geared toward media. The plan is to get together with the media representatives on the AMBER Alert Oversight Committee to refine the training and determine how to best distribute the training information.

Ms. Lovelle inquired about dealing with law enforcement agencies that may not know the correct criteria needed for an AMBER Alert, where to direct them to get training. Director Karsten said that directing agencies to the Patrol would be the best way to help them get the correct criteria.

Ms. Odle inquired why some agencies wouldn't want to attend the AMBER Alert training courses. Director Karsten said staffing levels may play a role in the low attendance numbers. She also stated the information is provided to the departments in multiple ways: WebEx, in person, and through administrative messages.

Ms. Odle asked if there are ways broadcasters can help get the information about the criteria of AMBER Alerts, either through Public Service

Announcements or social media. Captain Hotz stated that if anyone has PSA ideas, please reach out.

Roundtable

Ms. Lovelle inquired about her term of four years expiring. Director Karsten said that AMBER Alert Oversight Committee members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. A committee member's service continues until replaced, or the person is no longer able to serve.

This concluded the committee's discussion.

Sheriff Korte motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Freeman seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.

AMBER Alert Oversight Committee Email Meeting

At 10:28 am on December 11, 2023, the AMBER Alert Oversight Committee met via email. A quorum was declared. Members of the committee reviewed the December 4, 2023, meeting minutes. Captain John Hotz made a motion that the minutes be approved. Deputy Communications Director Sami Jo Freeman, DHSS, seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

AMBER Alert Oversight Committee Email Meeting

At 1:53 pm on December 11, 2023, the AMBER Alert Oversight Committee met via email. A quorum was declared. Members of the committee reviewed the finalized draft of the AMBER Alert Oversight Committee 2023 Annual Report. Captain John Hotz made a motion that the report be approved. Owner/Managing Partner Chelley Odle seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Six votes cast on Monday, December 11, 2023, one vote cast on Thursday, December 14, 2023, and one vote cast on Friday, December 15, 2023.



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH &
SENIOR SERVICES